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# YOUTH



## *The American Agenda*

A Report of the National  
Initiative Task Force on  
Youth at Risk.

May 1989

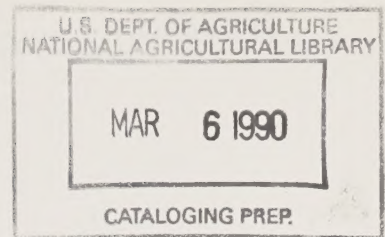
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# **YOUTH: THE AMERICAN AGENDA**

**A Report of the Cooperative Extension System  
National Initiative Task Force on Youth At Risk**

**May 1989**





## FOREWORD

**"If We Can Dream It...We Can Do It!"**

**Walt Disney World,  
The Land of Imagination**

"Youth At Risk" was identified by the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) as the ninth national initiative for the Cooperative Extension System in May 1988. During this short time, the Extension National Initiative Taskforce on Youth At Risk (YAR) has developed an agenda for action for the System that addresses the critical needs of youth. This report—and four regional workshops—outline the first steps necessary to make this agenda a reality.

In 1987-88, the Extension System examined and refocused its national educational network on a few initiatives of nationwide importance. Eight initiatives were chosen and programs developed and announced. Two of these initiatives—Building Human Capital and Family and Economic Well Being—surfaced the need for the System to increase the emphasis on the critical needs of American youth.

As the Task Force worked, it synthesized and built on the materials, reports, and previous work of many other groups—inside and outside the land-grant system. The YAR Task Force also interviewed key national and state policymakers, government officials, and corporate executives. And, it surveyed states to identify Extension model programs now reaching high-risk young people.

The time for deliberation is over. It is time to take action. . .to rethink the way we do business. . .to boldly accept the challenge of "Youth: The American Agenda" and the institutional and organizational change it implies! "If we can dream it. . .we can do it!"

**/s/The Youth at Risk National Initiative Task Force**

Prepared by the  
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## THE ISSUE—YOUTH AT RISK

"My friends, we have work to do. There are the homeless, lost and roaming—there are the children who have nothing, no love, no normalcy—there are those who cannot free themselves of enslavement to whatever addiction—drugs, welfare, the demoralization that rules the slums. There is crime to be conquered, the rough crime of the streets. There are young women to be helped who are about to become mothers of children they don't care for and might not love. They need our care, our guidance, and our education...."

President George Bush  
Inaugural Address, January 20, 1989

# INITIATIVE TASK FORCE REPORT

## YOUTH AT RISK

May 1988

### SITUATION

As the 21st Century approaches, America faces a youth crisis crossing social, cultural, and economic barriers. Disturbing statistics and trends reveal poverty, poor health and nutrition, child neglect and abuse, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and depression and suicide among young people at an all-time high. Existing education, community, health, and child care approaches are not meeting the challenge!

**ALL AMERICAN YOUTH ARE "AT RISK." MANY OF THE MOST VULNERABLE MAY NOT DEVELOP INTO HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE ADULTHOOD.**

This is a frightening, but real analysis. The implications of a generation of young Americans lost to family, community, and country ultimately results in

## A NATION AT RISK.

### EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY AS KEY

Youth become "at risk" from three primary conditions: poverty, lack of family support, and negative peer pressure. While there are manifold causes within each of these conditions, they describe the areas in which action must occur if the Nation is to prevent youth being at risk. Lack of self-esteem, limited vision for the future, and no sense of a meaningful role are characteristics synonymous with youth at risk. Teen pregnancy, substance abuse, child neglect and abuse—these symptoms underline the real problem: our national neglect of children and families.

School dropouts are of particular concern. Young people are leaving the educational system unable to read or function in the work world.

Significant changes in economic and family structures demand new approaches to workable support systems.

Communities, public and private organizations, and educators must examine their current programming for families and children. Working together, they must expand and redirect the Nation's networks of support to meet the challenge.

The Cooperative Extension System's nationwide educational system is an integral part of this support network.



## NATIONAL IMPLICATION— THE PRICE OF NOT ACTING

**"There will be no quick fixes, no magic silver bullets. What we need is intensive, long-term experimentation and commitment to education, opportunity, and empowerment. If we cannot offer a real vision, a real hope..., America may lose an important segment of its society..."**

**David Ellwood**  
*The Forgotten Half*  
Final Report,  
The Wm. T. Grant  
Foundation Commission

**"Recognize these are national issues, not just charitable or social issues...For too long we've had a self-serving attitude [in delivering programs]...."**

**John Kyle**  
National League of Cities

Current statistics and trends paint a grim picture of a Nation that is poorly preparing its young to cope with present realities—let alone future problems. Youth at risk is no longer a topic only for social workers, educators, and the media. It is a major agenda item in both corporate board rooms and the political arena. A growing sense of crisis exists across the Nation.

## ECONOMIC REALITIES

In 1987, the Committee for Economic Development, a group of national corporate leaders, called for family policy changes at the state and national level. These leaders also targeted greater community efforts led by American business. The economic impact of our national neglect of children and families is staggering!

Illiteracy and lack of job and work skills prohibit many youth from entering the work force. The national cost for institutions, medical care, and welfare continues to mount. Consider the following:

- The annual cost for a family on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) is \$4,300.
- The annual cost for each family on Food Stamps is \$6,600.
- The annual average cost for incarcerating a person is \$15,000.
- The daily cost for detaining a juvenile ranges from \$68 to \$118, depending upon the type of facility.
- One-half of all welfare payments are made to women who gave birth in their teen years.

**By contrast, prevention and intervention programs are more effective and less costly:**

- The National Alliance of Business estimates that each \$1.00 spent on prevention/intervention programs will save \$4.75 in reduced remedial education, welfare, and crime costs.

- A recent report by the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families identifies additional evidence of effective prevention programs relating to preschool education, health, and parent education. Studies show a return of \$6 to \$8 for every \$1 spent on prevention programs.

## SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Teen pregnancy, substance addiction, child neglect and abuse—as previously stated, these symptoms underline the real problem: our national neglect of children and families. Everyday, growing numbers of youth are daily separated from the mainstream of American life as the consequences to society continue to rise:

- One in every five children lives in poverty.
- Each year 500,000 teens will attempt suicide; 5,000 will succeed.
- More than 23 million adults are functionally illiterate; 13 percent of the Nation's teenagers join this group annually.
- In 1985, 2 million children were reported to state agencies as victims of child abuse and neglect.
- About 7.5 million children suffer emotional problems warranting mental health treatment.
- Nearly 50 percent of the Nation's high school seniors say they have used illegal drugs during the past year. Over 3 million teenagers are chronic alcoholics.
- Four out of every ten teenage girls will become pregnant; one out of five will bear a child.

The economic and social statistics cited above have staggering implications for our Nation and its educational system. The bottom line remains: **are we willing to pay the continued price of not acting?**



## EXTENSION INITIATIVE: LEADERSHIP, ISSUES, AND GOALS

**"Be an advocate of where real heroes can be found. Keep your programs directed at the local scene...Programs need to be held holistic and comprehensive. Develop strategies to get the maximum and optimum participation of the community...Seek to involve both private and public funding and share what you do..."**

**David Hackett**  
*Executive Director*  
Youth Policy Institute

**"When Extension deals with universal problems, it needs to involve as many stakeholders in the process as possible, even if they don't agree with you!...What is Extension's role?...Define your parameters ahead of time..."**

**Dr. Robert Brown**  
*Director, Educational*  
Affairs Division  
National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

The Cooperative Extension System is committed to developing and delivering "Youth At Risk" programs as part of its educational mission within the land-grant university system.

### CRITICAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED

As it focuses on this youth development agenda, Extension has identified eight critical educational needs for priority:

- Self-esteem
- Careers and Employment Skills
- Fitness and Health
- Reading and Technological Literacy
- Parental Support
- Child Care
- Problem Solving/Decisionmaking Skills
- Futuring.

The Extension focus will be on prevention and intervention programs rather than treatment. Extension will:

- Expand the youth outreach mission and resources of the total land-grant university system to meet the needs of youth at risk.
- Develop and deliver programs for the most susceptible youth that build strengths and treat causes rather than symptoms.
- Provide leadership and employment skills training for America's future leaders and workers.

- Train youth professionals and volunteers to work with young people, families, neighborhoods, and the larger community to identify and prevent potential problems.

## **COMMUNITY-BASED—A UNIQUE POSITION**

Cooperative Extension's delivery network is anchored in local communities. Extension education combines the expertise and resources of federal, state, and local governments. Nearly 3 million volunteers support this partnership and magnify its impact. Strong linkages with both public and private groups are also crucial to the Extension System's vitality and strength.

Extension is positioned as the local educational outreach of the land-grant university. The system is uniquely qualified to enhance this role and focus on targeted "youth at risk" issues. Extension has proven experience and expertise in:

- Working in and with school systems.
- Managing a successful youth development program already reaching 4.8 million youth.
- Recruiting, training, and managing volunteers.
- Developing and guiding youth peer groups.
- Accessing the technical and research expertise of the university and faculty.
- Building community coalitions.

## MODEL PROGRAMS— MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

**"There is a need to reclaim and to develop a sense of family. We need to communicate this need...to reinstate it into the lives of people...a sense of caring and a sense of right and wrong. Washington's leadership needs to listen. We need to have flexibility...to tailor to community needs and to insure that programs are owned by the community. Your role in Extension can serve as a catalyst and as a resource...You are closer to people, and it's more likely to work...."**

**Senator Dan Coates**  
Washington, DC

In conjunction with other agencies, organizations, and educational institutions, the Cooperative Extension System has begun working throughout the Nation to program for youth, families, and communities in the "youth at risk" area. Some examples of Extension educational impacts are:

### **After-School Programs**

- The program, 4-H CARES, targets day-care providers in several counties; Extension staff work with after-school programs enlisting community participation from firefighters, police, library staff, and others.
- The After-School project reaches 3,000 children per day at 26 sites. Extension involved 20 other community agencies in organizing and delivering this program.
- Through the Adventure program, two State Extension Services are licensed to provide after-school care at several sites.

### **Depression and Suicide Prevention**

- Tackling Tough Stuff—aimed at reducing teen depression and suicide—is a joint program of Extension and medical faculty at one land-grant university. Twenty other states and several Canadian provinces are adapting this program to train health professionals, school personnel, and college faculty.
- Targeted to students in grades 7 through 12 in 16 counties, the Teen Suicide and Stress Prevention program in one state is coordinated with the Lieutenant Governor's office. Kids learn how to develop communication and problemsolving skills for use with parents and peers and how to identify the warning signs and deal with teen suicide and depression. Since the program began in 1985, it has contributed to the 20 percent decrease in the state teen suicide rate.

### **Substance Abuse Prevention**

- In one state, the American Cancer Society funded a joint Extension and Public Health School program called "Project for Health" with a \$5 million grant. This 5-year intervention effort addresses youth abuse of smokeless tobacco and snuff.
- More than 1,000 vulnerable youth in 13 counties are involved in prevention/intervention programs through a statewide institute on substance abuse.
- Extension faculty and the Department of Corrections in another state are targeting efforts through a joint alcohol abuse program for first-time offenders.



- "Project 4 Teens", another state Extension effort, builds a community support system to plan and implement prevention programs for peers, younger children, and parents.

## Parenting and Health Issues

- Pregnancy prevention and teen parenting programs in one state reached 10,000 youth in school classrooms and 64,000 more kids through a targeted community school newsletter.
- The Mentor Mother program pairs teen mothers and adult volunteers for individual and group counseling and education.
- Seminars to increase family communications on sexuality reached 800 families in 45 counties. A similar statewide education conference reached 600 professionals.
- Extension developed a Parent Readiness Education Program (PREP) for teen parents and youth in eight urban schools. The State Board of Education provided funding; faculty from the Schools of Education and Medicine also participated.
- In response to a State Board of Education mandate, one State Extension Service reached teachers, public officials, 6 other states, and 27 counties through a video and teleconference program about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD's). Extension staff collaborated with 21 other agencies and organizations on this project.

## Child Care

- An Early Intervention Program for parents of children at risk is being delivered in cooperation with Head Start offices in six states.
- Kids in Charge, On My Own At Home, Safe at Home, and Operation Safe Kids are representative of several Extension Latchkey programs targeted to elementary school children to better care for themselves when home alone. Kids learn how to handle emergencies, strangers, phone calls, and how to prepare nutritious after-school snacks.
- With a grant from the Victims Advocacy Division of the State Attorney General's office, one State Extension Service developed an informational program for ministers and local public officials. Extension homemaker volunteers also work with the Attorney General's office and child abuse support groups across the state.
- Through the "Home Visitation: Child Abuse Prevention" program, Extension volunteers work with teen parents in cooperation with the Department of Health.
- Through the PACT (Parents and Adolescents Can Talk) program, young people build positive self-concepts and improve their interpersonal communication and decision-making skills. These skills enable them to exercise greater responsibility over their sexual behavior and to resist media and peer pressure to become sexually active. The major thrust of PACT is open communication between parents and youth. Developed by one State Extension Service, PACT can be delivered in both community and school situations.

## Self-Esteem and Futuring

- "SPACES; Preparing Kids for a High-Tech and Global Future" is an Extension program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. SPACES addresses: inner space (personal coping and creative skills), outer space (advanced technology), and shared space (global and cultural issues).
- Another state project, funded by the Americana Foundation, established an urban youth

education center for kids to develop skills necessary for survival in a fast-paced, changing world.

- The "Lightspeed" program, a cooperative Extension effort with state community colleges, targets 2,000 fifth and sixth graders using teachers and college students as volunteers.
- In another state, several inner-city projects, in cooperation with the Department of Human Services and Police, teach leadership development, self-esteem, and coping skills to young people living in urban housing projects.
- "I'll Take Charge" is a state 4-H project with special funding from the Pillsbury Company and video support from the Farm Credit Services. Teens—especially those in rural areas—look at career and educational options, set goals, and learn to make life decisions.
- Implemented in six counties, the "DARE to Be You" program taps existing community resources as volunteers and participants, cooperating with the State Departments of Health and Education and the Center for Disease Control. "DARE" targets such high-risk populations as Native American youth in summer employment programs, alternative school students, and youth referred through the juvenile diversion program.



## STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE

"We have to keep thinking about young people first. The problems are so large...There is more to do than we will ever be able to do...Someone has to think very seriously, very wisely about how we do the integrating in the network of the various organizations....to make sure we cover the problems and get the most efficiency from what we already are doing."

Dr. John Byrne, *President*  
Oregon State University

"Building coalitions, partnerships, and networks of various groups is a good idea. When groups work together for a common goal greater success can be achieved. Once you involve someone on a problem they become more aware and concerned about that issue...Youth empowerment is a good idea...It helps attack youth problems at their source."

Stephen Perkins, *Student*  
North Carolina State  
University

Collaboration, cooperation, and community capacity-building are key to a successful implementation strategy as Extension directs resources to the Nation's youth at risk agenda. Youth will be involved in designing and delivering programs that make a difference.

## MOVING INTO TOMORROW

As it moves forward to implement youth at risk and related programs, the Extension System will target three areas:

**Youth Development Education**—develop prevention and intervention strategies so that young people can gain competency and self-esteem necessary for projecting a positive future;

- Learn and use group interaction and coping skills with peers, parents, and the larger community; and
- Learn leadership skills and explore career opportunities.

**Parent Education**—teach successful strategies that enable parents to:

- Develop coping and parenting skills based on youth developmental needs issues.
- Raise their children to achieve in school and develop into mature adults.
- Become involved and active advocates of youth and supportive community services.

**Community Education**—provide an effective framework for community leaders and organizations to:

- Work together in effective partnerships, coalitions, and networks.
- Establish new partnerships and linkages with business, industry, and others to work cooperatively on priority youth issues.
- Work with local school systems to keep youth on the education track in grades K-through-12 and to provide after-school programs.
- Work with interested adults who will become mentors.

## NEW ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACHES

Three critical organizational patterns are important to the success of Extension programming for youth at risk:

- The 4-H program can and should be expanded to address youth at risk, **but that alone is not sufficient**. Successful Extension programming will require new initiatives in youth and family development that do not use the name and emblem of 4-H.
- Coordinated interdisciplinary efforts within Extension that use home economics, youth development, and community development expertise can and should be implemented, **but that alone is not sufficient**. Successful Extension programming will require involvement of university faculty expertise from many disciplines beyond current Extension faculty.
- Successful Extension programming for youth at risk will require **collaboration and not competition** with other youth-serving organizations and agencies. Because these organizational patterns are critical to implementing youth at risk initiatives in the states, it will be essential for Directors and Administrators of Extension to play a major leadership role in developing programming at each land-grant institution. **No one Extension unit can implement it alone.**

## PROPOSED COMMUNITY PROJECTS

New approaches are needed to initiate these partnerships and implement program strategies in selected communities.

Extension must target programs to high-risk youth living in urban to rural communities where economic opportunities are limited. Specific projects could include

- Project 1: Targeted Communities**—Programs will be directed to a specific community or neighborhood where need is significant in terms of risk factors: poverty, high incidence of drug use, teen pregnancy, school dropouts, AIDS, and homeless youth. Large cities may require multiple projects. **The initial target would be to reach 200 communities.**
- Project 2: Youth As Resources**—Youth are resources with desire and capacity to demonstrate their concern and skills working with younger children and their peers on critical community and youth issues. This project provides the needed opportunity for youth to have meaningful roles where they know their help benefits others. It will demonstrate the volunteer strength of a young society desiring to see their peers grow and develop into productive citizens. **The initial target is to reach 500,000 youth.**
- Project 3: Mentors**—A new volunteer cadre with mentoring skills is needed to focus on youth at risk. Trained mentors will work with Extension professionals in communities to reach youth at risk and their parents. They will be trained in the following areas: self-esteem, meaningful roles, commitment to the future, decisionmaking, and parenting skills. **The initial target is to involve 80 percent of the states in mentor-training programs.**
- Project 4: School-Age Child Care**—Extension has proven experience and success in youth development, experiential education, working with schools, and a commitment to complementary programs with schools. Extension is equipped to provide the dependable, high-quality, after-school child care programs widely needed across

the country. Programs will be designed to be mostly self-supporting from user fees and state subsidies for low-income participants, with fees based on ability to pay. **The initial target is to involve 70 percent of states in implementing school-age child care programs in the first 3 years.**

**Project 5: High Risk Youth**—Extension's best opportunity to work with youth at risk is to collaborate and cooperate with other agencies in training and evaluation programs for crisis intervention. This approach will focus on improving school performance, returning dropouts to a learning environment, and improving the overall health of youth at risk. A broad array of university resources will be needed to create materials and strategies for training and cooperation with other community agencies and organizations. **The initial target is to involve 65 percent of states in developing collaborative programs for high-risk youth.**

**Project 6: Literacy and Employability**—Scores by school-age youth on standardized tests in reading, math, and science continue to drop as the job market demands increased reading and technological literacy. Economics demand that the Nation place a renewed emphasis on education. Without this intensified support, future jobs will go unfilled while the numbers of undereducated increase. Through community-based, nonformal education, Extension can provide experiential learning opportunities that reinforce the school's formal educational objectives while improving youth employability skills. **The initial target is to involve 70 percent of states in conducting literacy, science, technology and career-oriented programs.**

## MANAGING FOR CHANGE

Staff development, retraining and retooling, contracting, and the new youth development professional are also essential as the Extension System begins to manage change. The needs of youth, families, and communities are ever-changing. As it moves forward, Extension will retrain and retool present staff; design and implement flexible staff development models; and use community, business, and industry as classroom. Electronically connected Centers of Excellence, comprised of professionals from universities across the Nation, will focus on emerging societal and youth issues, research, program design and implementation, and staff and volunteer development and training. Proposed projects include

**Project 7: Centers for Youth Development**—The university's expertise of research and its knowledge base for youth development is critical for effective program delivery. An electronic network of academic scholars and researchers within and among universities will enhance communications and help them share research findings and establish research priority areas for family and youth issues and prevention programs. **The initial target will be to establish inter-institutional networks among 90 percent of land-grant universities, increase research and sharing with other universities, and establish four to five multistate networks.**



Project 8: Staff Development and Training—Educational programs for existing staff on the strategies of prevention/intervention programming and youth development education will be conducted. A national plan would be established with state leadership involvement to identify appropriate educational components and materials. **The initial target is to involve 100 percent of states in implementing staff prevention/intervention and youth development training.**

To reach all at-risk audiences these projects will have common criteria: multi-cultural/lingual; equal opportunity and affirmative action, and a team approach with both 1862 and 1890 institutions participating.

## CAN EXTENSION MEET THE CHALLENGE?

Critical challenges remain: more and more Americans must face the reality and consequences of not acting to ensure the future of the Nation and its next leaders—OUR YOUTH. Extension can—and will—meet the challenge. But Extension can't do it alone and it can't do it without the resources and commitment necessary to get the job done.

The real question is whether enough human and financial resources can be mobilized to move Extension nationwide into communities to do the job. **The future of our Nation depends on it.**



## APPENDIX I

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## APPENDIX II

# YOUTH SOCIAL ISSUES INTERVIEWS: NATIONAL SELECTED SAMPLE

**David Hackett**, *Executive Director*  
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*Director of Materials Development, Resource and  
Informational Science Education Division*  
National Science Foundation  
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**Dr. Robert Brown**, *Director*, Education Affairs Division  
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William T. Grant Foundation  
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Family Court  
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**Dr. John Byrne**  
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**Patricia Calvert**, Washington, DC  
**Grant Shrum**, Washington, DC  
**Rachel Tompkins**, West Virginia  
**Lois Chaplin**, New York  
**James Pratt**, New York  
**Eddie Locklear**, North Carolina  
**Joe Weber**, Oklahoma



## SUMMARY—YOUTH SOCIETAL ISSUES INTERVIEWS

### Role for Land-Grant Universities?

The land-grant university has many opportunities to fulfill critical roles. It is first called on to lead as a social institution in states to bring other leaders of agencies, government, private industry, and the volunteer sector to examine ways to cooperate and merge efforts to benefit youth and families.

Universities are already beginning to examine ways to reach across their vast academic resources to intensify efforts in the following areas:

- Educate and support youth professionals who will work in communities.
- Conduct research and disseminate findings on programs and methodologies leading to effective curriculum and training.
- Be an advocate of youth and public policy in order to promote intervention and prevention programming.
- Assist in establishing community-based programs to empower the community as a stronger partner in problemsolving.
- Continue to innovate in such areas as mentoring, peer teaching, and tutoring.

### Leaders in Addressing Youth Societal Issues

As leaders were asked to identify who was doing the best job with certain topics, the responses were varied. No single group was identified as leading with all issues. Such a response strongly suggests the need for coalitions and partnerships among organizations in order to deliver strong programs in cooperation with each other.

**What actions must take place in our country to turn youth societal issues around and secure, not only the future of our Nation, but the leadership potential to keep us a strong, competitive, democratic society?**

We need to take several actions, including

- Local planning and neighborhood involvement to gain community ownership of programs;
- Youth organizations conversant and comfortable with learning theory applicable to youth; and
- Help young people develop so that they can learn to recognize right and wrong, enjoy life, feel good, and look to the future.

We need a change in the ethic of our society about youth including

- A positive ethic where youth and family are valued, not an ethic that supports disposable youth or other human beings;
- A level of funding for youth programs from Congress that is equal to the level of funding for defense programs; and
- A recognition of youth as valuable resources desirous of meaningful and useful work.



## **How can we do a better job of reaching the hardest and most difficult-to-reach youth and families?**

Increased involvement of people in neighborhoods is key. The community is a much better place for caring to take place as well as commitment from people. Educators should

Hit the street, go where kids are;

- Work with gangs and change them to positive peer groups;
- Learn to entertain and provide more hands-on application experiences;
- Find new ways of offering services...one-stop shopping, i.e: child care, jobs, food stamps, community center...deal with whole people and problems not just one need or issue; and
- Address issues early through developing parenting skills, provide parenting course in public schools.

## **What new youth societal issues, not now largely recognized, might we as a Nation be facing 5 years from now?**

National leaders were not optimistic that today's problems would be solved. The following symptoms of problems were mentioned.

- Suicide
- Violence
- Drugs
- Job preparation/skill shortage
- School dropouts/education crisis
- AIDS
- Homeless
- Foster care "aging out"
- Increased generational division
- Teen sexuality
- Child care

Practically every national leader supported the need for local collaborations to work within neighborhoods to focus program delivery on youth issues. They also recognized such efforts are not easily accomplished, but well worth the effort to form a successful coalition. Organizations within coalitions will share resources with each other to strengthen their efforts, but do not have to give up their competition for new resources. Youth and communities will benefit from the cooperation.

## **What is your view on youth empowerment?**

There was unanimous agreement that youth empowerment was basic to getting results with youth. There is temptation to prescribe the boundaries, but most feel youth must learn to take control of their lives and will become more productive as a result of their self-empowerment. There was also recognition that many youth want to assist other youth and have skills to make a meaningful contribution.

## **Identify some roles that volunteers should play in dealing with youth issues.**

Most leaders recognized the value of volunteers. The range of jobs volunteers fulfill with youth organizations is endless. As positive role models and caring adults, volunteers fulfill a critical youth need. Whether they are in a teaching role, assisting youth learn new skills;

a mentoring role, being supportive and caring over a longer period of time; or a support role, raising money, sharing their professional expertise, or shorter service roles; volunteers are vital to youth and to youth organizations. Volunteers are dependent on good training and support from the professionals.

**When asked for summary advice:**

- Keep your program directed at the local scene.
- Programs need to be holistic and comprehensive.
- Collaborate.
- Seek to involve both private and public funding.
- Keep youth focused on the future.
- Be willing to change and maintain flexibility to meet youth on their terms and to meet their needs.
- Use your system within the land-grant universities to lead the effort nationwide.
- Get youth involved in the community.
- Be concerned about racial and cultural issues—make sure your programs respect sensitivities and keep youth working together.







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